

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 249 513

CS 208 606

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TITLE A Guide to Teaching Self/Peer Editing.
INSTITUTION Wisconsin Univ., Madison. Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction.
SPONS AGENCY National Endowment for the Humanities (NFAH), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 82
NOTE 35p.
AVAILABLE FROM Wisconsin Writing Project, 556c Teacher Education Building, University of Wisconsin, 225 North Mills St., Madison, WI 53706 (\$2.50).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Content Area Writing; *Editing; Learning Processes; *Peer Evaluation; *Revision (Written Composition); *Self Evaluation (Individuals); Student Role; Teacher Role; *Writing Evaluation; Writing Improvement; *Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS National Writing Project; Theory Practice Relationship; *Wisconsin Writing Project

ABSTRACT

Designed to help teachers use peer and self editing as learning devices, this booklet offers techniques that can work in all disciplines. The first major section of the booklet discusses editing decisions and the writing process, presenting charts that depict some of the steps writers follow in the prewriting, writing, and rewriting stages. The second section offers procedures for teaching peer and self editing, and the third provides suggestions and cautions to consider while planning peer editing training. The fourth section contains sample assignments for use at the elementary, middle grade, and high school levels. Appendixes contain lists of additional resources and a sample checklist for use in peer editing. (FL)

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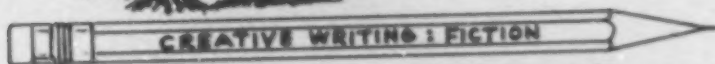
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Wisconsin Writing Project

1982

A GUIDE TO TEACHING
SELF/PEER EDITING

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"While [the writer] works he is alone. If the work is difficult...he feels alone, and sometimes even abandoned. But the real question is: how much loneliness can you know. But the work itself isn't especially accurate in any case; that which is named loneliness is probably more nearly ineffectiveness, a form of failure, or form of fear..."

William Saroyan, 1961

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Preface

Several previous Wisconsin Writing Project guides have mentioned self/peer editing as part of the writing process. (See Appendix A.) It is our intent to focus on this skill and to offer suggestions that you, the educator, might use for self/peer editing in your classroom.

Editing as we refer to it can be divided into two parts: 1) that which is done by the writer (self editing); 2) that which is done by classmates (peer editing). The most effective results for good writing come from a combination of self and peer editing (Fitzgibbon, 1980). This demands careful preparation on the part of the teacher and the student editors.

Self editing occurs when the students look at their ideas and sift out the ones to be used. They will also proofread for mechanical errors and necessary revisions to be made before presenting this writing to an audience.

Peer editing can be carried out in a variety of ways: an entire class might look at a model and edit it; a small group might edit the members' writings, or edit on a one-to-one basis. This process of editing examines mechanical errors, as well as style, organization, audience, sentence structure, and clarity.

When self and peer editing take place during writing, many benefits are gained by both student writers and the teacher (James, 1981). Some of these benefits are:

1. Students learn style and organization by reading others' papers.

2. Students become more aware of audience and purpose for writing.
3. Students more readily accept and use peer criticism.
4. Students learn to identify specific errors and correct them.
5. Students are made responsible for making analytical suggestions.
6. Students try not to repeat their mistakes because of peer feedback.
7. Students evidence increased motivation to write and to revise (James, 1981).
8. Students develop a better social relationship within the classroom (Pianko, 1980).

One important benefit to you as a teacher is more effective use of your time in the different role you play in your classroom. You will have additional time to work with students having special problems. You can be available for any necessary conferences and you will save time since you are not the only one responsible for making suggestions and correcting papers. You should begin to receive more refined papers as your students become aware of the writing process and, eventually, better writing.

This guide is designed so that self and peer editing can be used as a learning device in all disciplines. By using and experimenting with some of these suggestions, you will find the techniques which work best for you.

. . . students tap peers and teacher as resources, from the time of early efforts toward the clarification of their ideas to later steps which assure that their writing is in standard form, ready for an audience. These students share with their teacher and peers a delight in just the right word and in an imaginative idea. They are members of a team of writers--which includes their teacher.

(Roser and Jensen, 1979)

Purpose

The purpose of this guide is twofold.

1. It points out that self/peer editing is an ongoing part of the writing process.
2. It offers techniques explaining how to use self/peer editing in your classroom to achieve more refined writing.

Editing Decisions and the Writing Process

Writing is a complex process which we have tried to analyze by separating it into different stages. But neither these stages nor writing decisions occur in any orderly, prescribed manner (Mamion, 1981).

Editing, which assesses how closely the writer's current product approximates the original idea, appears to be an integral stage in writing. It is indispensable to good writing. Every time writers choose one word or idea over another or select one type of sentence over another, they are editing. As an on-going process, editing helps writers find direction, enhance the vision of an end product and clarifies expression.

Unfortunately, editing skills are seldom taught to student writers because they are, for the most part, unconscious (automatic) processes.

Teacher-directed editing experiences, either among peers or as individuals, provide essential training grounds where students can be made aware of the values of editing within the writing framework. A variety of editing functions may be taught at various points in the process: students learn to select from a number of options; modify the current product; eliminate unnecessary or ambiguous wording or ideas; expand ideas and clarify the message. The following chart lists some of the steps writers follow and includes useful self/peer editing practices which can occur at the various stages of the writing process.

PRE-WRITING

ACTIVITIES During this stage the writer is...	DESIRED OUTCOMES The writer wants...	SELF-EDITING Writer makes decisions about...	PEER-EDITING Writer tests decisions with peers to...
inventing	to generate ideas	determining relative value of ideas or information	generate ideas
brainstorming	to explore subject		discuss aspects of topic
researching	to explore potential resources	determining which aspects of subject are meaning- ful to author	respond to author's early ideas
discovering	to uncover previous knowledge	determining procedures to gain further information	suggest possible sources on subject, how to use, examine related subject matter
planning	to narrow and consider potential structure and form	deciding what's pertinent to potential audience and project questions	brainstorm potential structure, form, and sometimes audience
plotting	to consider possible (or assigned) audiences	developing questions to answer	suggest directions for research
warming up	to decide what author or audience wants to know	determining and selecting order, significance of information and appropri- ate organization	suggest interesting aspects of topic, what's appro- priate, create set of questions needing answers
stimulating	to recall vocabulary, fragments of ideas	narrowing types of audiences and projecting their interests	***
motivating	to determine voice (if not indicated in assignment itself)	writing a sample to test ideas	Author uses own or peer suggestions to set direction and begin, or return to, writing.
creating			
inquiring			
outlining			

WRITING

ACTIVITIES	DESIRED OUTCOMES	SELF-EDITING	PEER-EDITING
During this stage the writer is...	The writer wants...	Writer makes decisions about...	Writer tests decisions with peers to...
composing	to explore subject	determining if development and information is adequate	share/orally read individual drafts
creating drafts	to condense information		
defining purpose, content and audience	to develop ideas significant to topic and the audience	questioning inclusions relative to audience interest	suggest potential importance in content, mechanics
	to create a structure suitable for purpose, audience, subject	imposing a structure and considering alternatives	respond to adequacy and clarity of development
	to select ideas and vocabulary appropriate to audience and subject	checking inclusion of tone and theme appropriate to audience and purpose	suggest alternatives within the draft
	to select theme and tone appropriate to subject and audience		offer suggestions of writing goals accounting for audience and purpose
			present questions related to purpose and audience

WORK ON THE DRAWING BOARD
a working model/draft

Author begins making changes based on own perception of the work so far and envisions potential end product.
Author again uses or discards suggestions in further draft revision.

RE-WRITING

ACTIVITIES	DESIRED OUTCOMES	SELF-EDITING	PEER-EDITING
This stage or is...	The writer wants...	Writer makes decisions about...	Writer tests decisions with peers to...
ing and ting reading	to make judgment about suitability to audience and purpose to determine clarity and adequacy of development of main message to examine work for style and voice to proofread for conventional spelling, mechanics, usage	reviewing assignment on established purpose and audience reviewing intended message checking for adherence to directions rechecking information and adding if needed for clarity eliminating superfluous information rereading and making improvements in weak sections checking work for consistent style and voice checking appropriate vocabulary making improvements in paragraph structure, sentence structure reviewing assigned or selected form	read work silently or orally for flow and content discuss and identify general perceptions of draft identify strong/weak sections suggest alternatives for development and improvement of message and style check mechanics, spelling, sentence structure, inconsistencies in style *** Author includes or eliminates suggestions in further drafts

Procedures of Teaching Self/Peer Editing

The steps in this procedure are general guidelines for teaching self/peer editing. Self/peer editing may occur in many different stages of the writing process. The various steps of this process need not be completed in one session. Instead, the process may operate in a cycle where the writers return to previous steps and repeat them. Some points to consider when introducing or implementing the process are listed below.

1. EXPLAIN PROCESS AND MAKE EXPECTATIONS CLEAR.

Be sure students know what the assignment is and what the group and/or individual is expected to do in editing.

2. PROVIDE A MODEL FOR PEER EVALUATION SESSION.

Display an example of writing on a transparency and ask the group to discuss its strengths/weaknesses; role-play the procedure in groups.

3. TALK ABOUT MEANINGFUL COMMENTS WHICH WILL HELP THE WRITER.

Focus on the positive.

4. CHOOSE SPECIFIC AREAS THAT WILL BE FOCUSED ON FOR EDITING.

Start with short writing assignments which enable students to grasp the process more easily.

5. HAVE STUDENTS WRITE ON A CHOSEN TOPIC FOLLOWING PREWRITING ACTIVITIES OR USE THEIR COMPLETED WRITINGS IN A SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION.

6. PROVIDE A CHECKLIST OR OTHER FORMAT TO USE AS A BASIS FOR EDITING (Ellman, 1979). (Examples of checklists are provided on pages of this guide.)

7. FORM SMALL GROUPS WHICH SERVE AS AUDIENCE/EDITORS.

8. SHARE EACH COMPOSITION ORALLY, WITH EACH GROUP MEMBER REACTING TO IT.

9. ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO BEGIN WITH SIMPLE ANSWERS FOR SPECIFIC ITEMS; LATER INCLUDE COMMENTS.

10. PROVIDE TEACHER MONITORING THROUGHOUT THE ACTIVITY.

11. HAVE STUDENTS RETURN TO THEIR INDIVIDUAL WRITING TO REVISE OR PROCEED TO NEXT PART OF THE WRITING PROCESS UPON COMPLETION OF GROUP EDITING.

This may be done immediately after editing session or at a later time.

12. DESIGN A METHOD TO MAKE USE OF FEEDBACK GAINED IN THE EDITING.

. . . responses received were put to different uses on different occasions. Sometimes the comments were simply read and noted for future writing occasions. Sometimes students revised and rewrote using those suggestions which seemed useful. Sometimes students were asked to select one composition out of two or three to rewrite for a special purpose, using peer responses to help them in making their selection and in their rewriting. Special purposes might be the submission of a best composition to the teacher, a poem for a classroom bulletin board display, or a story for a classroom collection on a particular theme. All responses to a given composition were stapled to the composition and placed in the student's file (Crowhurst, 1979, p. 758).

TEACHERS NOTES

Suggestions and Cautions

Much has been written about how peer editing can lessen the teacher's paperload. In addition, self/peer editing has been shown to be an effective way to improve the quality of student writing. But it is not a panacea. Training students to be good editors and critics will lessen paperwork; it will not immediately lessen work. The editing tasks cannot merely be transferred to the students. In order to be successful, peer and self editing must be explicitly and incrementally integrated into the writing program. An entirely new type of learning situation is created as both the teacher and the students are asked to assume roles which they may never have had before. The teacher becomes a facilitator, while students become teachers and critics.

Below is a list of suggestions and cautions you may wish to consider while planning peer editing training.

The Changing Role of the Teacher

1. Your primary function is to train students to become independent writers. The process is slow. Don't be discouraged if your first attempts are not 100% successful.
2. Explain your expectations thoroughly. The structure of the small group activity needs to be understood completely by the students and by the teacher before they start.
3. Don't try to accomplish too much at once. You are teaching a process as well as a skill. The initial experience with editing should be designed to guarantee success. Zero in on one skill the students have

already mastered. With each subsequent lesson introduce one additional skill.

4. Become involved with the groups. Join one and serve as a model, or circulate and guide those groups which may be wandering off task. Let them know you're interested.

5. Be prepared to develop methods or procedures which actually make use of peer feedback (Crowhurst, 1979. p. 758).

Small Group Dynamics

Peer editing is similar to other forms of small group work. Keep in mind the irksome problems associated with this type of learning situation. Because every class will react differently, you will need to be flexible.

1. There will be a noise factor. You can control this to some degree by the size of the groups and the form of editing. Rely on checklists and written critiques if the noise level gets out of hand.

2. The time needed to edit will vary from group to group. Have further activities or follow-up writing built into your lessons.

3. Don't use editing groups with every assignment, and vary responsibilities. Remember group editing may be used effectively within each of the three stages of the process.

4. Not all students will make appropriate editing suggestions, especially when their own concept or skill is weak. That's why it's a good idea, when feasible, to have at least two editors working on a paper.

Unique Features of Peer Editing Groups

Despite all the similarities, peer editing is not identical to other small group activities. Not only are students asked to help one another acquire new skills and understand new concepts, but also they are asked to

share their personal feelings and experiences. This affective function may create some unique problems. Because students are acutely conscious of peer reaction and approval, they may be reluctant at first to evaluate one another's work.

1. Select group members. Don't let students group themselves. Friends hesitate to criticize one another. Antagonists tend to go to the other extreme.

2. Groups should be constructed carefully; students in each group should complement each others' strengths and weaknesses, thereby alleviating the problem of "the blind leading the blind." This necessitates an accurate assessment of each student's writing skills.

3. When you assign small groups, keep in mind not only different abilities but also different personality types. Two cynics in a group can be devastating.

4. Let a group work together for a few assignments so members feel comfortable with each other. However, it's not a good idea to assign permanent groups. Students need to be reminded of the larger audience for whom they are writing.

5. As their skills develop, students should be encouraged to suggest specifically how papers might be improved. This activity provides additional roles for the editors as problem-solvers. They, too, become involved with the article and can provide writers with possible alternatives.

6. Always stress positive criticism. Students tend to view evaluation as a negative activity. A good rule of thumb is to require as many positive comments as negative ones.

Self-Editing

Students need to feel competent in group editing before they will confidently approach self-editing. With careful planning, preparation, and evaluation of the process, you can teach effective editing. Just remember to be flexible, alert, and responsive to on-going group dynamics. "I feel better able to judge my own papers. I learn more about my papers from what students say than from a teacher's marks on a paper."

Sample Assignments

Pre-Writing—Secondary Level

This example is designed to illustrate the use of the preceding steps as they apply to peer/self editing in the writing process. It shows how a simple, short exercise in self/peer editing during the pre-writing stage can encourage planning, plotting, and creating during the composing step of the writing process. It also shows how the process applies to cross-curricular writing assignments—in this case, a secondary art research assignment. The illustration assumes that students have been asked to describe in a two-to-three page research paper the life of an American painter, including major contribution to the American painting movement and two or three major works. The paper will be presented to the class in a "student guest lecturer" series. It is also assumed that students have gathered books, magazine articles, and periodicals for this assignment. The following procedures will cover several class periods, during which students plan their assignment.

1. Begin by reminding students of the importance of planning and sorting information before beginning to write. Use a list of simple questions that writers ask themselves to be sure the right information for the assignment has been collected.
2. Display relevant models. (These can be students' papers from previous semesters or models prepared specifically for the exercise.)
3. Discuss with the students how paring to obtain information worked in the models.

4. Using models, small group and large group discussions, establish a set of guidelines for organization of content.
5. Distribute student-designed checklist questions.
6. Allow students time to self-edit their own notes or form small groups to peer-edit each others' notes using the checklist questions.
7. Allow time for the students to discuss their concerns related to the research process.
8. Encourage class comments that will assist students in the pre-writing process.
9. Monitor students' work.
10. Encourage students to go on to the composing stage when the pre-writing editing is completed.

American Painters Research Project

Student Generated Checklist to Prewriting.

Ask yourself the following questions about your material before beginning to write the first draft of your research paper.

I. Discussion of the life of an American painter.

- A. Did you include birthdate and birthplace?
- B. Did you include important information about the painter's heritage?
- C. Are there significant events in the artist's childhood that led to or influenced a career as a painter?
- D. Did you discuss the artist's education?
- E. When did the artist's interest in painting begin?
- F. Was training in art provided?
- G. Did the painter receive recognition for his/her painting while living? How?
- H. What significant events occurred during the painter's life?
 - 1. Exhibits?
 - 2. Awards?
 - 3. Honors?
- I. Is the artist living and working today?
- J. If deceased, how did the artist die?

II. Discuss the painter's contribution to American painting.

- A. Where does the painter's work fit into the chronological development of American painting?
- B. What school of painters influenced his/her work?
- C. When and how did the painter's individual contribution begin to show in his/her work?
- D. How would you characterize this painter's work?
- E. Does the painter's work make a political/social statement?

III. Discuss two or three major works.

(For each work ask yourself:)

- A. When and where was the work produced?
- B. What medium was used in the painting?
- C. What painting techniques were used in the work?
- D. How does it fit into the chronological events of the painter's life?
- E. Was it immediately recognized as significant? If not, when did this happen?
- F. How does it reflect the painter's most significant contribution to American painting?

Composing—Middle Level

This example is designed to illustrate the use of peer and self editing in the composing and editing stages at the middle school level.

Assignment: Using a recent field trip, the students will use answers from topic questions with supporting details in the formation of paragraphs.

Prewriting: The students have already had a prewriting experience in which a museum trip to view exhibits on Indian life was reviewed to generate topics. With or without the help of peers, each student chose a topic and developed 5 relevant questions to be answered.

1. Begin by reminding students that the purpose of the paper is to use each topic question as the basis for a separate paragraph of the paper. The answers with supporting details, will become the contents of each paragraph.

2. Provide models (from previous semesters or those specifically prepared for the lesson) of completed papers with their original topic questions. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of paragraphs.

3. Discuss what kinds of comments help the writer improve each

paragraph as opposed to comments which do not give direction for improvement.

4. Discuss the specific areas which will be emphasized in editing.
5. After reviewing the prewriting activity, allow students to research and compose a first draft of the assignment.
6. Distribute and briefly explain how students use the checklist to self edit their papers.
7. After allowing time for self editing, assign students to groups which use the checklist to peer edit.
 - a. Does the author answer the topic questions? How well?
 - b. Does the author use details to support those answers effectively?
 - c. Do the paragraphs blend into an organized paper? Suggestions?
8. Allow students time to discuss each paper within their groups.
9. Encourage students to follow the format of the checklist in providing comments on the papers.
10. Monitor student work.
11. Upon completion of group editing, have the students examine comments from peers.
12. Direct students to use peers' comments in the writing of their final drafts.

Re-Writing--Elementary (Primary)

This example is designed to illustrate the use of peer/self editing during the re-writing stage. It shows how a simple, short exercise in peer/self editing can help in refining a final paper. In order to set criteria in the re-writing stage, it is important to explain the pre-writing and composing stages. The subject area is nutrition for a health unit.

Pre-Writing: Brainstorm a list of foods on the board that students like to eat.

Using the list of foods, have students work in pairs or individually to designate which foods belong in good/bad food categories.

Composing: Students orally share their food lists with partners or groups.

Partners respond to the food list and tell if they agree or disagree with the placement of foods. (This would also be a good time to remind students to check spelling words with the board list.)

Students then write a paragraph with a partner or individually, choosing either the good or bad list of foods. (Audience options: To inform someone who doesn't know anything about good or bad foods; to tell what their favorite food is and tell about what food group it comes from, how it tastes, etc.)

- Re-Writing:
- 1) Remind the students of the purpose of a paragraph. The purpose of this assignment is to write one complete paragraph, using either the foods from the good or bad food lists.
 - 2) Provide a model on the overhead of a good paragraph. (Model can be students' papers from previous year or models prepared specifically for the exercise.)
 - 3) Discuss with the students positive comments that can be made about it. (Example: This paper shows good use of descriptive words, mechanics, or consistent usage of good/bad foods throughout the story.)
 - 4) Choose one specific area that will be emphasized for editing. (Example: Consistent usage of good/bad foods throughout the story.)
 - 5) This item can be added to a checklist in the classroom.
 - 6) Allow students time to self-edit their own work or form small groups to peer-edit each others' work, only looking for that one specific area.
 - 7) Allow time for the students to read orally their own stories and make comments on the specific area with a partner or individually.
 - 8) Monitor the groups while the writing activity is being conducted.
 - 9) Encourage students to go on and re-write their papers for the final draft.

NOTE: This procedure can happen over several days and does not need to be done in one sitting.

Checklist for Beginning Writers:

Expand sentences by asking questions—who, what, when etc.

Add one detail to the paragraph.

Start all sentences with a capital letter.

End all sentences with a period, question mark or exclamation.

Check spelling by pointing to each word in isolation starting at the end of the story and continuing to the beginning.

Appendices

APPENDIX A

Further information on self/peer editing can be found in the following Wisconsin Writing Project Guides:

A Guide to Evaluating Students' Writing, Wisconsin Writing Project, 1978.

A Guide to Teaching the Writing Process from Pre-Writing to Editing, Wisconsin Writing Project, 1978.

A Guide to the Role of the Teacher in the Writing Program, Wisconsin Writing Project, 1981.

A Guide to Using Models to Teach Writing, Wisconsin Writing Project, 1978.

A Guide to Writing Across the Curriculum, Wisconsin Writing Project, 1980.

APPENDIX B

Another writing resource on specific techniques (strategies) for the pre-writing, composing, and editing stages can be found in the Individualized Language Arts: Diagnosis, Prescription, Evaluation resource manual. The model below can be used in partnership with the writing process and in self/peer editing.

Pre-Writing

Starter Techniques

- . Unfinished Sentence
- . Framed Paragraph
- . Sentence Synthesis
- . Outlining
- . Expansion By Paragraphing

Composing

Improver Techniques

Editing

- . Expansion
- . Slotting
- . Reduction
- . Movability

An Example of an Improver Technique—Slotting (primary)

Upon examining student writings, the teacher notices that students did not use clear, accurate vocabulary usage in their stories or compositions. Many of the papers are characterized by repetition of the words little and big.

The teacher (a) brainstorms a group of words to slot in or substitute for the words little and big with the class.

- (b) instructs the students to refer back to their writing and substitute with other descriptive words from the brainstormed list for the words little and/or big.

For further information about Improver and Starter Techniques refer to:
Individualised Language Arts: Diagnosis, Prescription, Evaluation resource
manual, Weehawken, NJ 07087.

APPENDIX C

Teaching Editing Checklist Progression—examples

The purpose of a checklist in self or peer editing is to help students recognize the presence or absence of specified qualities in written work. Both content and mechanics are part of the analysis. The structured list can be geared to different ability level with careful choice of concepts and vocabulary.

Beginning Stage: Yes/No Answer Checklist

Elementary

Does the author describe
how the people look?

Does each sentence begin
with a capital letter?

Does each sentence end
with a period?

Secondary

Does the author develop
characterization?

Does the author involve
dialogue?

Does the author include
three similes?

Next Progression: Yes/No Checklist with Comments

Elementary

Does the author describe
how the people look?
How well?

Secondary

Does the author involve
dialogue?
How effective?

Next Progression: Open-ended Response

Elementary

What do you like about the
story?

Secondary

List the good points of
the story.
List what may be improved.

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The Wisconsin Writing Project is an effort by school teachers, college faculty, and curriculum specialists to improve the teaching of writing at all levels of education. The Project is funded by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the University of Wisconsin Extension, the Wisconsin Improvement Program, and the National Endowment for the Humanities (through the University of California, Berkeley). The views expressed in this guide do not necessarily represent the views of the above named organizations.

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